

Today, I had scheduled three Katrina-related bills for markup in the Judiciary Committee. They were not ready by our 24-hour deadline, and the gentleman from Michigan objected to that, so I called off that markup, and we are going to have to do that next week. Otherwise we would have it on the floor much more promptly.

The fact of the matter remains that these people need to have the immunity for liability in order that they can volunteer and effectively deliver their volunteer services. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the other opponents of this bill have come up with a litany of horrors that this bill would allow criminal conduct to be immunized, and that is not the case.

This bill specifically does not apply in any way to protect those whose willful, wanton, reckless or criminal conduct causes injury; nor does it apply to those who violate the Federal or State civil rights laws when injury occurs.

Now, today we have a chance to cast a vote in favor of our volunteers, our volunteer individuals and those nonprofit organizations who have stepped up to the plate to provide essential relief services to the people who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina; or we can send it back to committee and have more hearings.

Well, by the time those hearings are over with, I am sure the first series of frivolous lawsuits will be filed; and believe me, the next time there is a disaster, hopefully not of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina, there will be a lot of organizations and a lot of individuals who will be afraid to volunteer to do what they want to do and do what they can do best, because they do not want to spend the rest of their lives in court.

Pass this bill.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3736, Katrina Volunteer Protection Act. This legislation will provide much needed legal protection for those charitable Americans volunteering in the Hurricane Katrina rescue and recovery effort.

It is imperative that when thousands of selfless volunteers respond to those who have incurred the wrath of a natural disaster that legal liability need not be hanging over their heads.

Currently, there is vast uncertainty from state to state about what defines legal protections for volunteers, especially when volunteers from one state travel to another to help out their fellow citizens.

Under current law volunteers who are not working with an official nonprofit organization are not covered by the Volunteer Protection Act. Therefore, there are absolutely no legal protections for the average American who wishes to volunteer.

This legislation will correct that gap in the law while at the same time continue upholding the penalties against those who act in a willful, reckless or criminal manner or who violate a State or Federal civil rights law.

Further if a volunteer's home State has a law on its books that provide greater liability protection, then this legislation would defer to those stronger protections.

This legislation will clear the way for all those Good Samaritans, who live in our great Nation, not to have to worry about lawsuits when they volunteer.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this legislation.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3736.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3132.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 436 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 3132.

□ 1206

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 3132) to make improvements to the national sex offender registration program, and for other purposes, with Mr. SIMPSON in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to bring to the House floor today H.R. 3132, the Children's Safety Act of 2005.

I introduced this legislation on June 30 in a bipartisan effort to address the growing epidemic of violence against children and the need for greater protection from convicted sex offenders through State registration and notification programs.

This year our country has been shocked by a series of brutal attacks

against children at the hands of convicted sex offenders. In June, our Nation was horrified by the kidnapping and murders of members of the Groene family by a convicted sex offender.

Two well-publicized tragedies earlier this year in Florida, in which 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford and 13-year-old Sarah Lunde were murdered by convicted sex offenders further underscore the need for quick congressional action to address the danger posed by individuals who prey on children.

In addition to the widely reported tragedies that have rightly brought this issue to the forefront, the statistics regarding the frequency with which such heinous crimes occur are staggering. Statistics show that one in five girls and one in 10 boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood. Yet less than 35 percent of the incidents are reported to authorities.

According to the Department of Justice, one in five children between the ages of 10 and 17 receive unwanted sexual solicitations online. Additionally, statistics show that 67 percent of all victims of sexual assault were juveniles under the age of 18, and 34 percent were under the age of 12.

In June of this year, the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a series of three hearings on child crimes issues, focusing on violent crimes against children, sexual exploitation of children, and the Sex Offender Registration and Notification program and related legislative proposals.

On July 30, the Judiciary Committee considered this bill and ordered it favorably reported by an overwhelming vote of 22 to 4.

Mr. Chairman, there are over 550,000 sex offenders in the country; and it is conservatively estimated that at least 100,000 of them are lost in the system, meaning that nonregistered sex offenders are living in our communities and working at locations where they can, and likely will, come into contact with our children.

This is simply unacceptable, and the legislation specifically targets this problem to enhance the safety of America's families and communities. The Children's Safety Act will make much needed reforms to the Sex Offender and Registration program by expanding the scope and duration of sex offender registration and notification requirements to a larger number of sex offenders.

The legislation also requires States to provide Internet availability of sex offender information, requires timely registration by sex offenders, and then enhances penalties for their failure to register and increases the disclosure requirements regarding their whereabouts.

The bill authorizes United States marshals to apprehend sex offenders who fail to register and increases grants to States to apprehend sex offenders who are in violation of registration requirements contained in the legislation.